

# Supplemental Report 2

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## Christel House Academy Detailed Performance Assessment and Profile



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<http://www.christelhouse.org/academy/default.asp>

▪ Grades served in 2002-03	K-4
▪ Maximum school size in 2002-03	276 students
▪ Grades served at capacity	K-12
▪ Maximum school size at capacity	676 students

This supplemental report presents information about the school in three sections:

- Christel House Academy's Students (enrollment and demographic information)
- Performance at Christel House Academy
- Detailed Description of Christel House Academy's Programs and Activities

## Christel House Academy's Students

**Figure 1. Enrollment and demand for Christel House Academy in 2002-03**

	Number of students
Maximum possible enrollment in first year pursuant to Charter	276
Number of students enrolled <sup>1</sup>	230
Number of applications received <sup>2</sup>	399

<sup>1</sup>Source: Indiana Department of Education, based on school's count of "Average Daily Membership" (measure the Department uses to count enrollment).

<sup>2</sup>Source: School self-report of data.

**Figure 2. Christel House Academy student composition**

Gender <sup>1</sup>		Race & Ethnicity <sup>2</sup>				Eligible for Free or Reduced-Price Lunch <sup>2</sup>	Special Education <sup>3</sup>	Limited English Proficient <sup>4</sup>
Male	Female	African-American	Hispanic	Caucasian	Other			
53.9%	46.1%	62.6%	9.6%	24.3%	3.5%	61.3%	6.1%	3.5%

Note: See main report for comparative data.

<sup>1</sup>Source: School self-report of data on the last day of school.

<sup>2</sup>Source: Indiana Department of Education.

<sup>3</sup>Source: Indiana Department of Education Division of Exceptional Learners, count reported December 2002.

<sup>4</sup>Source: Indiana Department of Education Division of Language and Minority Programs, count reported October 2002.

**Figure 3. Percentage of students in Christel House Academy, IPS, and Indiana passing ISTEP+ tests at the *beginning* of the fall 2002 school year<sup>1</sup>**

	English			Math			Both		
	CHA	IPS	IN	CHA	IPS	IN	CHA	IPS	IN
Percent of 3 <sup>rd</sup> Graders Passing	37%	58%	72%	20%	57%	67%	18%	44%	59%

Source: Indiana Department of Education. City-wide data unavailable.

<sup>1</sup>Since the charter school's students took these tests near the beginning of the school year, these percentages represent the starting levels of performance of the charter students, not how much the students learned at Christel House Academy.

## Performance at Christel House Academy

The section below describes Christel House Academy's performance over the first school year by addressing the common performance indicators in the Mayor's Charter School Performance Framework. The complete Performance Framework may be viewed on-line at [http://www.indygov.org/mayor/charter/accountability\\_report](http://www.indygov.org/mayor/charter/accountability_report).

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## Is the academic program a success?

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### Are students making substantial gains over time?

**Test score analysis.** Christel House Academy administered the standardized Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) in reading, math and language to its kindergarten through fourth grade students in both fall 2002 and spring 2003. (Kindergarten students did not take the reading exam.) Each number in Figure 4 indicates the percentage change in the average test score achieved in a particular grade and subject from fall to spring. For example, the +8.7 in the first row indicates that the average reading score for 1<sup>st</sup> graders was 8.7% higher in spring 2003 than it was in fall 2002.

**Figure 4. Percentage change in average Iowa Test of Basic Skills scores between fall 2002 and spring 2003 at Christel House Academy**

	Kindergarten	1 <sup>st</sup> Grade	2 <sup>nd</sup> Grade	3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade	4 <sup>th</sup> Grade
Reading	--	+8.7	+7.7	+8.4	+6.1
Math	+8.2	+7.3	+6.5	+7.3	+5.4
Language	+5.8	+6.4	+6.9	+8.9	+7.7

Source: "Progress of Indianapolis Charter Schools: An Analysis of National Test Score Data," prepared by New American Schools, Arlington, VA, 2003.

Note: See Supplemental Report 6 for detailed notes on test score analysis.

Figure 4 shows that students made progress, on average, between the fall and the spring in all grades and all subjects tested. But how large were these gains? One way to find out is to compare the progress of Christel House Academy's students to that of other students nationally who took the same exams at the same points in their academic careers.

Since ITBS is a national standardized test, we can ask the following question: if we ranked all the students across the country who took the ITBS, where would *Christel House Academy student stand on average* in that ranking?

Figure 5 provides the answer. The first row of the table shows how kindergartners at Christel House performed in math. In the fall, on average kindergartners at Christel House scored as well as or better than 54% of all students nationwide in math. We call this number, 54, Christel House Academy's "Fall Average Percentile" for kindergartners in math. The next column shows that by the spring, on average Christel House kindergartners still performed as well as or better than 54% of all students nationwide. The school's "Spring Average Percentile" was 54.

Christel House students, on average, gained ground on their national peers in some grades and subjects, but stayed even or lost ground in several others. The fact that students, on average, lost ground in some areas does not mean that these students did not progress in these grades and subjects – they progressed, as Figure 4 illustrates, but not as much as their peers nationally.

**Figure 5. Academic progress of Christel House Academy students, fall 2002 through spring 2003**

Grade/subject	Fall Average Percentile	Spring Average Percentile	Gained ground vs. students nationally	Stayed even with students nationally	Lost ground vs. students nationally
K Grade Math	54	54		✓	
K Grade Language	50	45			✓
1 <sup>st</sup> Grade Reading	27	27		✓	
1 <sup>st</sup> Grade Math	33	33		✓	
1 <sup>st</sup> Grade Language	48	40			✓
2 <sup>nd</sup> Grade Reading	35	43	✓		
2 <sup>nd</sup> Grade Math	25	20			✓
2 <sup>nd</sup> Grade Language	29	23			✓
3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade Reading	39	49	✓		
3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade Math	36	40	✓		
3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade Language	36	44	✓		
4 <sup>th</sup> Grade Reading	37	32			✓
4 <sup>th</sup> Grade Math	40	34			✓
4 <sup>th</sup> Grade Language	37	43	✓		

Source: "Progress of Indianapolis Charter Schools: An Analysis of National Test Score Data," prepared by New American Schools, 2003.

Note: Conclusions about whether students gained or lost ground were based on simple comparisons of fall and spring percentiles.

Note: See Supplemental Report 6 for detailed notes on test score analysis.

## Is the organization viable?

**Is the school in sound fiscal health?** Three quarters of parents surveyed at Christel House Academy reported they are satisfied with the school's finances, while nearly one in five parents reported they "don't know." At the same time, 14% of school staff reported they are satisfied with school finances, while 21% were uncertain about their satisfaction.

The Mayor's Office commissioned a review of each school's finances. A summary of Christel House Academy's finances, including financial statements, appears in Supplemental Report 4.

**Are the school's student enrollment, attendance, and retention rates strong?** The school's attendance rate was 92.4% in 2002-03 (see Figure 6). Three-quarters of parents surveyed at Christel House Academy expressed their intention to continue to enroll their children in the school as long as the school serves students their children's age. (Note: over 17% of parents completing the survey did not respond to this question and are not included in the above calculation.)

**Figure 6. Christel House Academy attendance rate in 2002-03 school year**

	Attendance rate
Christel House Academy <sup>1</sup>	92.4%
Indianapolis Public Schools (IPS) <sup>2</sup>	95.3%
All Indiana Public Schools <sup>2</sup>	95.7%

<sup>1</sup>Source: School self report.

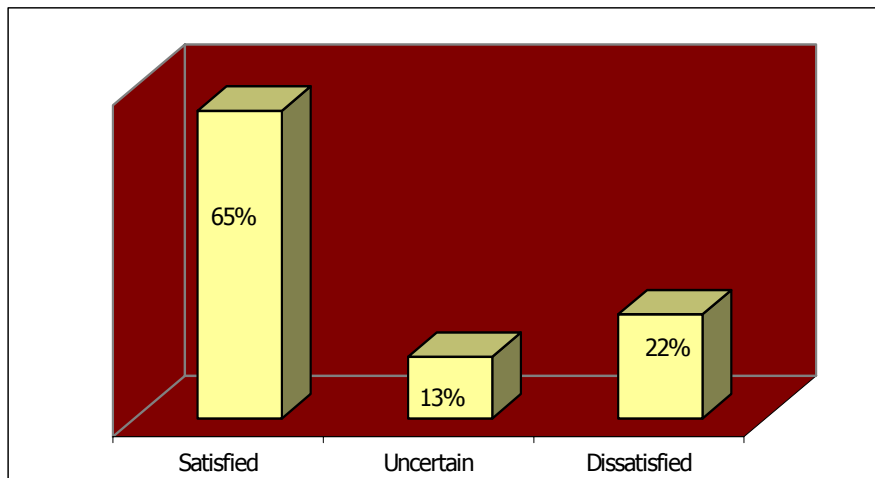
<sup>2</sup>Source: Indiana Department of Education. City-wide data unavailable.

**Is the school's board active and competent in its oversight?** Governance reviews showed that Christel House has used board resources and private funding to build a first-rate educational facility and an effective financial management team. As an on-site visit by the Mayor's Office indicated, the school has also carefully documented its governance, employment, insurance, and financial information, which suggests the school pays close attention to its legal and management responsibilities. Board members include parents, members of Christel House Inc.'s executive staff experienced in starting and supporting Christel House schools around the world, experienced educators, business and community leaders, a managing partner of a law firm, and a senior vice president of a post-secondary institution.

The charter school receives considerable support from Christel House, Inc. The governance review found that the school will need to give careful thought to which policies should be made at the campus level versus at Christel House, Inc.

**Is there a high level of parent satisfaction with the school?** Nearly two-thirds of parents at Christel House reported they were satisfied overall with their charter school, as shown in Figure 7. Figure 8 shows the percentage of parents who were satisfied with specific aspects of the school.

**Figure 7. Overall parent satisfaction with Christel House Academy**



Source: All results are from confidential surveys of Mayor-sponsored charter school parents administered spring 2003 by the Center of Excellence in Leadership of Learning at the University of Indianapolis.

Note: See Supplemental Report 6 for detailed notes on survey protocol and analysis.

Note: Calculations do not include missing responses. "Satisfied" includes "somewhat satisfied," and "very satisfied" responses. "Dissatisfied" includes "somewhat dissatisfied" and "very dissatisfied" responses.

**Figure 8. Parent satisfaction with features at Christel House Academy**

School Feature	Satisfied <sup>1</sup>	Don't Know	Dissatisfied <sup>2</sup>
Class size	79%	0%	21%
School size	99%	0%	1%
Length of the school day	86%	1%	13%
Length of the school year	88%	2%	10%
Individual attention teachers give to students	79%	0%	21%
Academic standards for students	77%	3%	20%
Curriculum	80%	0%	20%
Materials to support the curriculum	83%	2%	16%
Quality of teaching	83%	0%	17%
Technology	87%	3%	10%
Extracurricular activities	86%	1%	13%
Opportunities for parent participation	94%	3%	3%
Parent information about student learning	83%	0%	17%
Communication from the school	89%	0%	11%
Sense of pride teachers and students have in school	83%	3%	14%

Source: All results are from confidential surveys of Mayor-sponsored charter school staffs administered spring 2003 by the Center of Excellence in Leadership of Learning at the University of Indianapolis.

Note: Calculations do not include missing responses. Additionally, some categories may not equal 100% due to rounding.

Note: See Supplemental Report 6 for detailed notes on survey protocol and analysis.

<sup>1</sup>Includes "satisfied," "moderately satisfied," and "very satisfied" responses.

<sup>2</sup>Includes "very dissatisfied" and "moderately dissatisfied" responses.

### **Is the school administration strong in its academic and organizational leadership?**

The expert site visit team noted that it would be helpful for the school to "clarify the roles, responsibilities and decision making processes among school administration, teachers, board, and director of education." Of parents surveyed, 84% reported they were satisfied with the people running Christel House Academy. Slightly more than half of the teachers (56%) reported in a survey that they were dissatisfied by the leadership provided by their school's administration, while nearly one in five teachers reported they were "uncertain."

### **Is the school meeting its operations and access obligations related to: organizational structure and governance obligations; physical plants that are safe and conducive to learning; fair and appropriate pupil enrollment processes; reasonable and safe transportation options available to eligible students; and legal obligations related to access and services to special needs and English as a second language students?**

Christel House Academy satisfactorily met its obligations in 2002-2003 for compliance with laws and regulations and access to students across Indianapolis. Neither the Mayor's Office's internal systems nor the expert site visit team indicated any significant concerns related to these obligations. Figure 9 displays the satisfaction levels of parents and staff on related issues.

**Figure 9. Parent and school staff satisfaction with Christel House Academy school operations**

School Feature	Parents <sup>1</sup>			School Staff <sup>1,4</sup>		
	Satisfied <sup>2</sup>	Don't Know	Dis-satisfied <sup>3</sup>	Satisfied <sup>5</sup>	Un-certain <sup>6</sup>	Dis-satisfied <sup>7</sup>
School leadership <sup>8</sup>	84%	0%	16%	25%	19%	56%
School finances	75%	19%	6%	14%	21%	64%
Safety				33%	27%	40%
School facilities	97%	0%	3%	93%	7%	0%
Enrollment process	94%	3%	3%	50%	17%	33%
Services for special needs students <sup>9,10</sup>	73%	N/A	27%	13%	0%	87%
Transportation (overall) <sup>10</sup>				53%	0%	47%
Drop-off/Pick-up time	88%	N/A	12%			
Drop-off/pick-up location	84%	N/A	16%			
Bus condition/reliability	89%	N/A	11%			
Time your child is on bus	83%	N/A	17%			

Source: All results are from confidential surveys of Mayor-sponsored charter school parents and staffs administered spring 2003 by the Center of Excellence in Leadership of Learning at the University of Indianapolis.

Note: Calculations do not include missing responses. Additionally, some categories may not equal 100% due to rounding.

Note: See Supplemental Report 6 for detailed notes on survey protocol and analysis.

<sup>1</sup>Shaded areas denote that the applicable group was not surveyed about satisfaction with the particular feature.

<sup>2</sup>Includes "satisfied," "moderately satisfied," and "very satisfied" responses.

<sup>3</sup>Includes "very dissatisfied" and "moderately dissatisfied" responses.

<sup>4</sup>Calculations for staff surveys do not include "don't know/not applicable" responses.

<sup>5</sup>Includes "somewhat satisfied" and "very satisfied" responses.

<sup>6</sup>Uncertain was ranked as three on a scale of one to five.

<sup>7</sup>Includes "not too dissatisfied" and "quite dissatisfied" responses.

<sup>8</sup>Wording of parent and staff surveys questions vary slightly.

<sup>9</sup>Special needs students include those for whom English is a second language or who have disabilities, academic difficulties, etc.

<sup>10</sup>N/A denotes "not applicable" as calculations for this feature do not include missing or don't know responses. Since not all students used special education or transportation services, only the responses of those parents who expressed an opinion about these services were included in these calculations.

## **Is the school providing the appropriate conditions for success?**

**Is the school's mission clearly understood by all stakeholders?** The expert site visit team noted that "all constituents are aware of and supportive of the school's mission, which is to serve under-privileged students who have not been successful in other educational settings." Ninety-three percent of staff members surveyed who expressed an opinion reported that they were aware of the goals of the school.

**Does the school have a high quality curriculum and supporting materials for each grade?** About eight in ten Christel House Academy parents reported that they were satisfied with their school's materials to support the curriculum. As Figure 10 illustrates, about one in four Christel House Academy staff members reported satisfaction with the resources available for instruction at their charter school, and 7% reported they were uncertain of their satisfaction.

**Figure 10. School staff satisfaction with features at Christel House Academy**

School Feature	Satisfied <sup>1</sup>	Un-certain <sup>2</sup>	Dis-satisfied <sup>3</sup>
School size	80%	13%	7%
Length of the school day	0%	7%	93%
Length of the school year	21%	0%	79%
Student-teacher ratio with respect to individual time given to students	40%	20%	40%
Ability of school to fulfill its stated mission	20%	40%	40%
Academic standards for students	87%	0%	13%
Curriculum	19%	38%	44%
Resources available for instruction	27%	7%	67%
Quality of teaching	57%	29%	14%
Classroom management and student behavior	20%	0%	80%
Technology	53%	27%	20%
Parent participation and involvement	33%	7%	60%
Information about student learning that parents receive	80%	13%	7%
Accessibility and openness to parents	80%	0%	20%
Sense of pride students and staff have in the school	27%	33%	40%

Source: All results are from confidential surveys of Mayor-sponsored charter school staffs administered spring 2003 by the Center of Excellence in Leadership of Learning at the University of Indianapolis.

Note: Calculations do not include missing or "don't know/not applicable" responses. Additionally, some categories may not equal 100% due to rounding.

Note: See Supplemental Report 6 for detailed notes on survey protocol and analysis.

<sup>1</sup>Includes "somewhat satisfied" and "very satisfied" responses.

<sup>2</sup>Uncertain was ranked as three on a scale of one to five.

<sup>3</sup>Includes "not too dissatisfied" and "quite dissatisfied" responses.

**Does the school effectively use learning standards and assessments to inform and improve instruction?** Figures 8 and 10 illustrate the level of parent and staff satisfaction with the academic standards for their charter school students. The expert site visit team found that the school needs to take steps to strengthen processes for using data to understand and improve student learning.

**Is the school climate conducive to student and staff success?** The surveys indicated that more than eight in ten parents at Christel House Academy are satisfied with the sense of pride students and teachers have in their school. At the same time, a lower proportion of staff members (about one in four) reported such satisfaction, and one in five staff members reported satisfaction with classroom management and student behavior at their charter school. About one in three teachers were satisfied with school safety, while about one quarter were uncertain about safety.

The site visit team noted that the school could benefit from "school-wide discipline processes and policies and ensure that teachers can implement processes and policies." It also suggested that the school "develop mechanisms to ensure that small numbers of students do not diminish the academic environment" and "establish and enforce standards for professional conduct and ethics for teachers related to providing a respectful and safe environment for students."

In the survey, teachers indicated on a nine-point scale (from no influence to a great deal of influence) how well they are able to influence areas that typically create difficulties in helping students succeed. A summary of these survey results for Christel House Academy is provided in Figure 11.



**Figure 11. Christel House Academy teachers' belief in their ability to influence student success**

School Feature	Little or no influence (1-3)	Some influence (4-6)	Quite a bit to a great deal of influence (7-9)
Controlling disruptive behavior in the classroom	6%	25%	69%
Motivating students who show low interest in student work	6%	31%	63%
Getting students to believe they can do well in school work	6%	13%	81%
Helping students to value learning	6%	13%	81%
Getting children to follow classroom rules	13%	19%	69%
Calming a student who is disruptive or noisy	13%	25%	63%
Establishing a classroom management system	6%	31%	63%
Assisting families in helping their children do well in school	6%	38%	56%

Source: All results are from confidential surveys of Mayor-sponsored charter school staffs administered spring 2003 by the Center of Excellence in Leadership of Learning at the University of Indianapolis.

Note: Calculations do not include missing responses. Additionally, some categories may not equal 100% due to rounding.

Note: See Supplemental Report 6 for detailed notes on survey protocol and analysis.

**Are the teaching processes (pedagogies) consistent with the school's mission?** On the survey of Mayor-sponsored charter schools, one in five staff members at the charter school reported their satisfaction with their school's ability to fulfill its stated mission while 40% were uncertain of their satisfaction.

The expert site visit team urged the school to "develop explicit guidelines and requirements for setting and delivering standards-based lesson plans." The expert site visit team concluded that the school could do more to "establish and enforce professional standards and processes for teachers related to academic accountability, expectations, roles and responsibilities" and should "take steps to strengthen processes to ensure continuous improvement such as planning, ...using data to understand and improve student learning, and professional development."

**Is ongoing communication with students and parents clear and helpful?** Nearly nine in ten Christel House Academy parents (89%) reported that they were satisfied with communication from their school, such as about special activities, events, and meetings. Four out of five school staff members and about four out of five parents also reported satisfaction with the information parents receive about student learning, as illustrated in Figures 8 and 10.

**Has the school developed adequate human resource systems and deployed its staff effectively?** The expert site visit team pointed to a range of human resources systems that could be improved at the school, including "regular observations and formative feedback, performance criteria and evaluation processes, [and] professional development."

In the surveys of Mayor-sponsored charter schools, staff members were asked to report their satisfaction with various professional features at their charter school. Figure 12 displays the results.

**Figure 12. Staff satisfaction with Christel House Academy's professional features**

School Feature	Satisfied <sup>1</sup>	Un-certain <sup>2</sup>	Dis-satisfied <sup>3</sup>
Salary related to experience	25%	19%	56%
Benefits such as health and life insurance, retirement, etc.	80%	7%	13%
Work environment	56%	19%	25%
Number of hours spent engaged in classroom instruction	60%	27%	13%
Number of hours spent engaged in other activities	47%	27%	27%
Time allowed for planning and preparation	21%	14%	64%
Amount of paperwork required	27%	13%	60%
Greater teacher autonomy in the classroom	71%	14%	14%
Level of teacher involvement in school decisions	57%	14%	29%
Opportunities for professional development	31%	44%	25%
Evaluation or assessment of teacher performance	33%	40%	27%
Teachers' non-teaching responsibilities	33%	27%	40%
Time staff spend together discussing the needs of individual students	20%	20%	60%

Source: All results are from confidential surveys of Mayor-sponsored charter school staffs administered spring 2003 by the Center of Excellence in Leadership of Learning at the University of Indianapolis.

Note: Calculations do not include missing or "don't know/not applicable" responses. Additionally, some categories may not equal 100% due to rounding.

Note: See Supplemental Report 6 for detailed notes on survey protocol and analysis.

<sup>1</sup>Includes "somewhat satisfied" and "very satisfied" responses.

<sup>2</sup>Uncertain was ranked as three on a scale of one to five.

<sup>3</sup>Includes "not too dissatisfied" and "quite dissatisfied" responses.

## Detailed Description of Christel House Academy's Programs and Activities

*Sources: Interviews with school officials and expert site visit team members (June 2003) and review of the school's charter application. It is important to note that this information was provided primarily by the schools. It is provided here to offer the public a more detailed picture of the school's programs and activities.*

Christel House Academy focuses on high standards of academic rigor, efficiency and accountability, while working to develop students' civic and ethical values. The school strives to instill a desire for lifelong learning and prepare students for higher education. It provides a research-based and classroom-tested "back-to-basics" approach with a curriculum focused on reading, writing and math, and requires mastery of essential skills for promotion to the next level. Teachers monitor student growth and proficiency of academic standards and track mastery through on-going assessments of skills and core knowledge.

The school uses Plato Learning, a comprehensive web-based educational program in reading and math. Incorporated within Plato are instructional strategies and unit assessments to ensure students receive intensive remediation in areas of weakness. Plato is aligned with Indiana standards and helps teachers to develop integrated lessons and individualized student lesson plans that draw upon a plethora of resources, including textbooks, web resources and teachers' own lesson plans. A primary characteristic of the Christel House Academy educational program is continuous assessment. In 2002-03 students participated weekly in Plato's computerized assessments; in 2003-04 the school will administer the Plato assessments an additional two to three times each week to identify gaps in their learning. Teachers are trained to provide instruction tailored to addressing these gaps. Students also spend part of each day in small, teacher-led reading groups based on ability level.

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Halfway through the 2002-03 school year, the school day was re-structured in order to provide students with even more tailored, individualized attention. For 45 minutes at the end of every day at Christel House, every staff member in the building was teaching (except for the school principal and receptionist), which enabled the creation of smaller teacher-led groups of students in grades one to four based on need and ability.

Addressing the needs of the whole child, Christel House Academy's after-school program enabled students to participate in daily enrichment activities that included music, sports, and health and wellness seminars. The school has a longer-than-average, 204-day school year, with before-school programs beginning at 7 a.m.

Christel House Academy has tried to create a caring environment that builds relationships based on trust with parents and students. The school works to nurture a sense of belonging in its families and strives for all students to experience success. Christel House Academy believes that every child can learn and holds itself accountable for providing the right environment to help students reach their potential, including making changes to the school program to more effectively meet the mission of the school.

### **Parental involvement**

- *Parent workshops.* Christel House Academy believes that it must closely partner with parents in order to be most effective. The school offers a series of parent workshops on topics such as how parents can work with their children at home on school work and how parents can develop their children's respect for themselves and others.
- *Parents taking initiative.* A Christel House parent who works for a non-profit organization took the initiative to conduct grant research for Christel House academy and identified several new potential sources of funding for the school. Another parent took steps to create a partnership between the school and the company for which she works.
- *Parent organization.* Parents developed a parent advisory group that has begun several projects including bringing a "book mobile" to Christel House.

### **Discipline and behavior**

- *Dean of students.* During the school year, Christel House added a dean of students to focus on developing core values. She addresses discipline issues with specific students, teaches a class about core values, and counsels individual families to focus on particular core values with their children to improve behavior and learning.
- *Partnership with the courts.* The school is finalizing a partnership with juvenile court Judge James Payne to develop a process for addressing student truancy. The school follows a multi-step process if a student has a problem with truancy – the third step will be a referral to Judge Payne's office. Christel House Academy is the first elementary school in the city to work with the courts in addressing truancy.
- *Planning for the future.* Christel House Academy is taking proactive measures to address issues related to student behavior. A mentoring program under development will connect an adult to students directly in their homes. If the student's parent is unable to effectively help get the child to school every day, the mentor can call the child at home before school to make sure he/she wakes on-time to meet the school bus. The mentors can also help to educate parents on effective ways to work with their children. Every student in the school participated in a "procedural learning" camp during the first two weeks of the 2003-04 school year, developed in partnership with New Directions Academy, an Indianapolis public school focused on student behavior and discipline. The purpose of the camp is to teach social skills, expectations the school has for each student, and procedures every student in the school must follow in every school classroom and school-related activity. Finally, Christel House Academy has forged an additional partnership with New Directions Academy. In lieu of expulsion, the school has an agreement to

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allow the student to temporarily attend the New Directions Academy, which has been successful in working with students who display behavior and discipline problems. Social workers for both schools will work together to counsel students in the transitions between the two schools.

### **School programs**

- *Ongoing evaluation.* Teachers administered weekly assessments through the Plato Learning curriculum program during the past school year to monitor student performance. These frequent assessments helped teachers to quickly identify areas in which students needed additional instruction and support. As a result, teachers could tailor instruction more closely to students' needs.
- *Spanish language instruction.* Starting in kindergarten, students study Spanish two to three times each week, and are encouraged to use their Spanish instruction in other parts of their school experience. For example, on one occasion a kindergarten student recited the pledge of allegiance in Spanish during the morning announcements. Now, many children at the school can recite the pledge of allegiance in Spanish.

### **Partnerships and donations**

- *Student health and wellness.* Christel House Academy believes that, to truly have an impact on its students, it must address the whole child, and this includes student health. The school has partnered with Learning Well, a community health network, in a minimum three-year grant program to provide health and wellness services, including daily nurse services. At no cost, Learning Well will ultimately develop an on-site clinic to diagnose and treat children at the school for all of their health and wellness needs: medical, dental, vision, social, and psychiatric.
- *Physical education.* Christel House Academy has partnered with the National Institute of Fitness and Sports (NIFS) to provide fitness and wellness classes. NIFS staff also participate in staff development trainings with the rest of the school staff in order to more fully integrate physical education into the broader school program, as well as to be a resource in other areas.
- *School land restoration.* Christel House Academy received a Partners in Education (PIE) grant from Keep Indianapolis Beautiful (KIB). In the springtime, all of the students and school staff, along with 223 additional volunteers, created an "outdoor lab" for the school. Utilizing one hundred seventy-five trees and shrubs, these individuals developed twenty-five acres of property to include a prairie, a pond, wetlands, a butterfly garden, a natural amphitheatre, and a fitness trail. Throughout the rest of the school year, teachers conducted lessons in the outdoor lab several times each week. Property documents show that the school's land was a park fifty years ago. The school, its students, and volunteers have returned the land to this original purpose.
- *Broader revitalization efforts.* Christel House Academy's KIB initiative has the potential to spawn a broader revitalization initiative in the surrounding neighborhoods. As a result of Christel House's land restoration efforts, business and community leaders are now devising a plan to encourage a community-wide revitalization for Indianapolis' southside. For example, the local city park and neighborhood association plan to continue Christel House Academy's work by cleaning up their own lands. In addition to improving the land on Indianapolis' southside, neighborhood groups view the school as a catalyst for broader change; a local church is exploring a partnership with the school because it sees Christel House Academy's relationship with neighborhood children as a way to reduce the level of crime committed by youth in the area.
- *Kiwanis support.* Kiwanis International has formed a strong relationship with Christel House Academy. During the Kiwanis international conference this past spring, conference attendees were asked to donate one book each to the Christel DeHaan Family Foundation. The foundation collected over 10,000 books, many of which are now in Christel House Academy's library as well as other Christel Houses around the world. During the conference, Kiwanis volunteers took Christel House Academy students to see a ballet performance and assisted teachers in their classrooms. Kiwanis members also volunteered during Christel House Academy's Keep Indianapolis Beautiful project. Additionally, Kiwanis has started a Key Club for Christel House

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Academy students focusing on leadership. Through this club, Kiwanis members teach students how to run a club and how to perform the various duties of an officer.

- *High school partnerships.* Christel House Academy has tapped into area high schools as resources for its students. Lutheran High School students worked with Christel House's fourth graders once a week. Students at Manual High School participating in an Americorps teacher training program developed and taught lessons to small groups of Christel House students for several hours each week.
- *College partnership.* The school has also reached out to Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI). Students enrolled in an educational psychology class at IUPUI volunteered several hours each week during the springtime; future students in this class will also volunteer at the school.
- *Preserving school facilities.* Lauth Property Group, the construction company that built Christel House Academy's facilities, collected \$10,000 in donations from its employees to purchase non-black-soled shoes for Christel House Academy's students. School leaders view the company's initiative as a demonstration that its commitment to the school goes beyond simply building the facility to actually preserving it.
- *Opportunities in music.* Indianapolis Children's Choir (ICC) is creating a new choir at Christel House Academy. During the past school year, Christel House's music teacher worked with the choir's director to identify a dozen Christel House students to participate in ICC's week-long summer camp. At the end of the camp, the students participated in an ICC performance and next year will form a new Indianapolis Children's Choir group based at the school.

### **Supplemental programs and activities**

- *Summer program.* The school runs a three-week long, full-day summer school program for remediation and acceleration. Students in second through fifth grade who are below grade-level are required to attend, but the program is open to all students who wish to participate. Students study reading and mathematics in the morning, followed by outdoor standards-based challenge activities in the afternoon. Students in the summer school program also go on several field trips throughout the summer.
- *Student volunteerism.* Students participated in several volunteer activities throughout the school. One class collected and donated food to a local food pantry. Additionally, students collected teddy bears from the Salvation Army, which they gave to the residents of a local nursing home. The students then continued their relationship by writing and exchanging letters with those same nursing home residents.

### **Staff evaluation and development**

- *Performance evaluations.* The school reported that teachers were evaluated on an ongoing basis throughout the school year through a performance evaluation process developed by school leaders. The school hired a master teacher to conduct classroom observations and pre- and post-observation meetings with individual classroom teachers. In addition to providing teachers with feedback about their teaching, the evaluation process was designed to identify teachers whose skill strengths most closely aligned with the Christel House Academy mission.
- *Support from experts.* Outside educational experts conducted professional development workshops with the staff. The experts also mentored teachers and co-taught classes with them to model good teaching and classroom management strategies.

### **School governance**

- The school has the unique opportunity to benefit from the vision and resources provided by Christel House, Inc., which is experienced in opening successful schools for disadvantaged youngsters around the globe. The governing board is highly specialized, has relevant experience in using and monitoring funds effectively, and possesses considerable experience to provide oversight and assistance in areas such as education, finance, accounting, and law.

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## School management

- Staff at Christel House Inc. provide high-level support for the school that includes fund raising, project development, and financial oversight. The school's liaison to Christel House, Inc. focuses on staffing, curriculum development, and overall accountability, and also provides a catch-all "safety net" for the school. The school's principal is thus free to lead the school's daily activities, including working directly with students and families.

## Facilities

- The school is located on the south side of Indianapolis, at 2717 S. East Street. The multi-level facility on 25 acres includes wide, airy hallways and large, bright classrooms. The school contains a multi-purpose room which also serves as a gymnasium and a cafeteria, and has athletic and recreational fields.

## Planned improvements for 2003-04

Christel House Academy planned to implement a series of major, critical changes to more effectively meet the mission of the school. For example:

- *Increased time on literacy and math.* In the 2003-04 school year, the amount of time the school planned to spend on literacy and math exceeds state standards – 20% more time spent on literacy, and 44% more time on math. The school planned to spend the first two hours of every school day solely on literacy (reading, spelling, and grammar). At the end of the day, classroom teachers will review the literacy and math skills taught.
- *New reading program.* The school elected to adopt a research-based, multi-sensory phonics program successful in creating strong readers by the end of first grade. Additionally, the school made the decision to implement Reading Counts, a program designed to identify where a child is in developing reading skills (comprehension and site word identification).
- *Restructured, longer school day.* Beginning in 2003-04, the school decided to require students to attend school until 5:15 pm each day to allow for important non-academic activities. School leaders believe that by lengthening the school day they can provide important activities in the middle of the day which will in fact prevent students from becoming overworked and tired from focusing solely on academics. This scheduling shift will also allow Christel House Academy's teaching staff to work with the students for a greater amount of time; the planned mid-day activities will focus on small ability-based reading groups during which every staff member at the school will teach a small reading group. The school decided to focus the other mid-day activities on student interests (e.g., reading, hip hop poetry, interpretive dance, Boy and Girl Scouts, Indianapolis Children's Choir, violin and piano lessons, and Tai Kwan Do).
- *New partnership with Indy Parks.* The school decided to work with Indy Parks to provide in-school club activities four days each week during the school's mid-day activities time (described above) as well as an intramural sports program Friday afternoons. The involvement of the City's parks will allow the school to have a strong extra-curricular activities program, and will be a way for the school to keep the cost for these programs to a minimum.
- *More frequent assessment.* In 2003-04, the school planned to increase the number of times students will take computerized assessments through Plato to assess their progress to three times each week. A new thirty-station wireless computer lab was planned to allow for the increased frequency in assessments. And the school has hired an affiliate of Edison Schools to conduct a monthly benchmark test of student progress. A coordinator from the company will work with the teachers and administration four times each quarter to interpret the data and use it to improve student performance.
- *Staff improvement.* In addition to planning a targeted professional development program for the 2003-04 school year, school leaders developed and implemented a performance evaluation process to determine in the first year which teachers and positions were not a good fit with the school's mission. This process led to the termination of nearly one-third of the school's staff at the end of the year. The school's superintendent interviewed over eighty individuals for the

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vacancies and hired many experienced teachers. As a result, in 2003-04, the school made the decision to assign one new teacher (i.e., with less than five years of experience) and one experienced teacher to each grade level.